



## Traffic Safety News and Facts for Employers May 1, 2007

### Latest Traffic Safety News

#### **Parents Can Make a Difference During Prom Season**

The school year is ending soon, and many teenagers will attend high-school proms and celebrate high-school or college graduations. Parents can make a difference in preventing underage drinking and related risky behavior by educating themselves about the activities teens are often exposed to during these celebrations. To help parents achieve this, the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration offers "Parents, Parties, and Preventing Underage Alcohol Use" in its online Family Guide. The Family Guide site supports the Start Talking Before They Start Drinking Campaign in its efforts to combat underage drinking and to educate parents, youth, and others on the issue of alcohol abuse. More information can be found at <http://www.family.samhsa.gov/teach/parties.aspx>.

#### **Nominations sought for Roadway Safety Awards Competition**

The Roadway Safety Foundation and the Federal Highway Administration are seeking nominations for the 2007 National Roadway Safety Awards competition. This awards competition is conducted to recognize outstanding roadway safety achievements. Public and private sector state, regional, and local organizations are eligible to apply. Awards are presented in three categories: infrastructure, operational improvements, and programs that address safety needs through data, evaluations, and planning. Applications must be received by June 1. Visit <http://www.roadwaysafety.org/rsf-awards07.pdf> for more information and an application.

#### **Traffic Safety Experts Plan For the Future as Baby Boomers Age**

A report from the Government Accountability Office finds elderly mobility issues will become more significant in the near future, because the number of licensed drivers will jump to 57 million by 2030. Older drivers are more likely to suffer injuries or die in a crash. The Federal Highway Administration has proposed several ideas, including larger signs, better-designed intersections, training, mechanisms to assess driver fitness and more frequent renewal of seniors' licenses. About half of the states are implementing these measures in varying degrees. Another concern for older drivers is dementia, which increases their risk in a crash by two to eight times. All states screen for vision, but not for "physical and cognitive functions." More than 50 percent of the states have special licensing requirements, but none has a comprehensive driver assessment. For more information, go to [www.gao.gov](http://www.gao.gov). Source: Government Accountability Office Report

#### **Occupational Safety Week to Concentrate On Transportation-related Issues**

The focus of this year's North American Occupational Safety and Health (NAOSH) Week, May 6-12, is transportation safety. "In the U.S. alone, transportation-related incidents continue to be the leading cause of on-the-job deaths," said Donald S. Jones, president of the American Society of Safety Engineers (ASSE). More than 6 million crashes were reported in 2005, causing 43,443 fatalities and 2.7 million injuries, costing an estimated \$250.6 billion. During NAOSH Week, ASSE, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and other partners will offer information and tools to reduce traffic deaths. Officials will kick the week off on May 7 at the Department of Labor/OSHA in Washington D.C.



### **Technology Key to Further Reducing Traffic Fatalities**

Just as technology helped make commercial aviation the safest mode of transportation, similar advances can improve the safety of the nation's highways, according to Transportation Safety Board Chairman Mark V. Rosenker. Traffic fatalities have leveled off after declining for years, but Rosenker said three major areas of technology will help prevent crashes: technology for crash avoidance, telematics and command and control. The most progress has been made with systems that prevent lane departures and rollovers and affect stability control. Sensors on vehicles and infrastructure can improve safety by calling for assistance after a crash or alerting drivers to weather conditions and construction updates. In development are warning systems to prevent certain types of crashes, such as backovers.

### **IIHS Finds Driver Death Rate Down; Some Vehicle Models Fare Better Than Others**

In a new study from the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS), some models of cars, minivans, SUVs and pickup trucks were found to have death rates much higher than the average 79 per million registered vehicle years, while others fell far below the average. The highest driver death rate was 148 for small four-door models; midsize and very large luxury cars had the lowest rates at 33 and 34. The average rate for all vehicles has declined by about 30 percent since the mid-'90s, said Anne McCartt, IIHS senior vice president for research. Twelve of the top 15 vehicles had electronic stability control (ESC) available; none of the lowest-ranked offered ESC. The study looked only at drivers and did not factor in driver behavior. "Though the focus is on drivers, the rates reflect the relative fatality risk for all occupants," McCartt said. For more information, go to <http://www.iihs.org/sr/pdfs/sr4204.pdf>.

### **Computer Model of Human Body to Predict Crash Injuries More Accurately**

Nine automakers and two parts suppliers have teamed up to develop a detailed computer model of the human body that would better predict injuries than crash test dummies. The human body is complex, and today's models only estimate what could happen in a crash with many gaps. The new model should predict trauma such as rib fractures and aorta ruptures, which may lead to 25 percent of traffic deaths. The Global Human Body Models Consortium has pledged \$18 million to develop six models, three men and three women, with possibility of building an entire family of models in the future. The companies have asked for proposals from 40 university and research groups across the world.

Source: Detroit Free Press, April 15, 2007

### **New Sensor to Help Prevent Crashes in Urban Traffic**

Continental Automotive Systems developed a sensor that can protect pedestrians by helping drivers avoid or reduce the severity of crashes under 25 mph. The closing velocity sensory system (CV) is designed to help reduce crashes in urban traffic. The system scans to the right, left and straight ahead of the vehicle. If it detects another object, it sends a signal back to a transceiver and calculates how far the object is from the vehicle and closing speed. The system can respond by putting the brakes on alert mode, initiating automatic braking, applying more pressure to the brake and tightening the seat belt. The system will launch in a European car in 2008. For more information, go to

<http://www.contiautomotive.com/>.

### **State Police Board to Review Crash That Injured New Jersey Governor**

New Jersey Governor Jon Corzine suffered a broken leg, breastbone, 12 ribs and a vertebra in a crash in which he wasn't wearing a seat belt and his driver, a state police trooper, was speeding. The governor was in the passenger seat when the SUV he was riding in crashed into a guardrail. A state police review board will determine whether driver Robert Rasinski was at fault and send the findings to the state police superintendent, who has discretion over disciplinary sanctions. Some lawyers and state police critics are calling for an outside agency to review the crash. Data shows Trooper Rasinski



was going at least 91 mph in a 65 mph zone. Corzine faces a citation for violating the state's seat belt law. Source: The Record, Bergen County, New Jersey, April 20, 2007

### Contest Denounces Thumping Tires as Good Way to Check Air Pressure

A tire-thumping contest at Hankook Tire's annual meeting in Akron, Ohio proved that the method does not accurately predict tire pressure. Only one of five tires was filled with the correct amount of air; about 2 percent of attendees guessed the right tire. "Trying to determine how much air is in a tire by thumping is the same as trying to determine if a truck's engine needs oil by thumping the hood," said Harvey Brodsky, managing director of the Tire Retread Information Bureau. He said the only way to accurately check air pressure is to use a calibrated tire gauge. Source: Automotive Fleet, April 24, 2007

### When Gas Prices Fell, So Did Tire Pressure Checks

Although the Rubber Manufacturers Association (RMA) recommends drivers check their tire pressure once a month, only 55 percent of drivers have in the past month, compared to 70 percent a year ago. The RMA president and CEO said that when gas prices fell in the fall, drivers paid less attention to their tires. Crashes related to low tire pressure result in 660 fatalities and 33,000 injuries a year, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). Tire pressure monitoring systems (TPMS), which alert drivers when air pressure drops 25 percent, will be equipped in all new cars in 2008 but should not be a replacement for using a tire gauge each month. The RMA sponsored its sixth National Tire Safety Week April 22-28 to educate drivers about proper tire care.

### Auto Buyers Demand Safety From the Government, Manufacturers

Consumers are making safety a priority when shopping around for a new vehicle. About one-third of car buyers search the Web for safety features before buying, according to a GM executive director. To meet the demand, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) completed its mandate that all vehicles come equipped with anti-rollover technology by the 2012 model year and is now working on rule-making for side-impact protection. Some safety advocates criticize NHTSA for not going far enough, while automakers say the fixes aren't worth the extensive cost. Two other developments in vehicle safety are frontal radar, which helps maintain a clear distance between vehicles, and driver-state monitoring, which alerts drivers if they're falling asleep.

Source: Detroit News, April 19, 2007

### Cameras Will Help Enforce Speed Limits in Arizona

Arizona will use cameras to reduce speeding and red-light running on state highways. The program, which will start with cameras in construction zones and traffic signals in certain locations, is the first of its kind in the U.S. Proposals for vans equipped with cameras that will be deployed behind barriers in construction zones will be requested in mid-May, and a contract could be awarded by July. For more information, go to <http://www.azstarnet.com/sn/hourlyupdate/179713>.

Source: Associated Press, April 23, 2007

### New Signs to Clear Up Confusion On Illinois' Toll Roads

The University of Illinois at Chicago is helping the Illinois State Toll Highway Authority develop new signs to direct drivers where to pay their tolls. With the use of computer simulators, research participants are able to test out the proposed signs before they're installed. "We've heard concerns from drivers about confusion over the existing signs," a toll authority spokeswoman said. Illinois could lead the way in toll sign science, as the Federal Highway Administration works to develop national toll sign standards. Test results show people prefer white signs over green and text-only instead of symbols. Improved signage is one way to reduce crashes by toll plazas, where half of all toll road crashes happen. For more information, go to <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/local/chi-0704220329apr23.1,5853125.column?coll=chi-news-hed>. Source: Chicago Tribune, April 23, 2007



### **Driving to Manhattan Could Become Costlier**

Commuters who drive into Manhattan could face a congestion fee that New York City Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg proposed as part of a broad measure to cope with an impending population increase. Revenue from the fees, about \$40 million the first year, would go toward improving the transit system. Car drivers would pay \$8 and truck drivers \$21 from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. on weekdays. Cameras would record license plate numbers so commuters could be charged on their account or sent a bill. Fees would not be collected for about another year.

### **Campaigns Encourage Firefighters to Buckle Up**

Fire police and firefighters can turn from heroes to victims when they neglect to wear seat belts. Not buckling up has been cited more this year than last among both groups, according to the United States Fire Administration. Thirty-seven states do not mandate seat belt use for firefighters; exemptions exist because unbuckling a belt could take emergency workers extra time when every second counts. In a poll by Firehouse.com, 45 percent don't buckle up every time they respond to an emergency. National campaigns, including a seat belt pledge and a national policy, are urging firefighters to use their belts. Source: Albany Times Union, April 22, 2007

### **Driver Distraction**

#### **Technology takes control out of drivers' hands to avoid crashes**

Automakers across Europe are testing pre-crash safety systems that will counteract driver inattention. Some include sensors that will vibrate a driver's seat if he crosses the dotted line. Another prototype braces the vehicle for impact if it senses the driver is about to hit an object. Next-generation vehicles will use video cameras and distance lasers to see what the driver sometimes can't. The next step will be radio networking where cars can exchange information, such as warning each other about upcoming road conditions or traffic. Some experts claim the tools can't be trusted because they'll be susceptible to hackers and can't be 100 percent reliable. "The moment we go outside the car and look at the environment, it becomes very complicated," said Raymond Freymann, managing director of BMW's research and technology group. "There is no time to react. All the decisions must be taken within a second." Sensing and networking technologies would appear first on luxury vehicles as early as 2010 but wouldn't become standard for another decade. For more information, go to <http://www.cnn.com/2007/TECH/03/09/cars.intelligence.popsci/> Source: Popular Science, March 15, 2007

### **Follow Safety Tips When Calling and Driving**

Around 28 percent of cell phone owners say they do not drive as safely as they should when they're using the devices, according to a survey by Pew Internet & American Life Project. SouthernLINC Wireless offers several tips for cell phone use while driving: use a headset to keep both hands on the steering wheel; try voice-activated dialing to place a call without punching in a number; keep the cell phone in reach instead of in a purse or glove box; end calls if traffic gets heavy or weather gets bad; pull over to look up a number or send a text message; and use a cell phone in an emergency or to report reckless drivers. Source: Business Week, April 18, 2007

### **News from the USDOT**

#### **Drivers Must Admit They Need New technology Before They Will Accept It**

New technology that would take control to prevent crashes requires customers to believe they might not be perfect drivers and could benefit from the advances. "Everybody thinks they are the gold standard of driving. People may be reluctant to give up some control of their vehicle," said Nicole Nason, administrator of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. She also said customers





won't use the services unless they're proven to be reliable. Drivers also need tools that are recognizable and easy to use. Source: Detroit Free Press, April 19, 2007

## Work-Home

### **Parents Question Buses, But They're the Safest Way to Get to School**

Recent high-profile crashes have prompted parents to question the safety of their children's school buses. Some parents prefer to drive their children themselves, but crash data and transportation experts say school buses are safer than other forms of transportation. School bus manufacturers have made several upgrades in the past few years in the areas of driver visibility and handling, navigation, chassis and body parts. Seat belts on buses would save one or two lives a year, research suggests. New Jersey, New York and Florida require lap belts, and California requires them on new buses. On average, eight children on school buses die in crashes each year, compared to 815 for all forms of school transport. Source: Wall Street Journal, April 12, 2007

## International Traffic Safety News

### **Rear-end crashes on the rise in Great Britain**

Congestion in Great Britain is leading to higher incidences of rear-end crashes. Eight of 10 crashes happen when the vehicle is stationary or moving at or under 10 mph, up from six out of 10 in 2001. Insurer WNS Assistance found many of the crashes were caused by distracted drivers. Traffic safety experts warn that high-speed crashes are still a danger. For more information, go to [http://www.fleetnewsnet.co.uk/news/view\\_article.asp?art\\_ID=43761&s=view\\_article](http://www.fleetnewsnet.co.uk/news/view_article.asp?art_ID=43761&s=view_article).

### **Dashboard Screens Allow Drivers to Choose Language**

Dashboards are becoming cluttered with various blinking lights, symbols and navigation instructions. Configurable screens that handle all of these tasks are one emerging solution, according to a new study from ABI Research. These driver information screens were first seen in high-end vehicles, but the market for them is expected to grow to \$1.75 billion by 2012. The major benefit is that drivers can select different languages that are stored in the screens, eliminating the need for universal symbols to stand for lights and switches. For more information, go to <http://www.abiresearch.com/abiprdisplay.jsp?pressid=847>. Source: ABI Research, April 26, 2007

### **Signs Beginning to Replace Speed Cameras in Great Britain**

Authorities in Great Britain are supplementing speed cameras with signs that warn drivers how fast they're going. The vehicle-activated signs are seen as an alternative that is cheaper, friendlier to drivers and has fewer political implications. The Department of Transport is trying to decrease traffic fatalities by 40 percent by 2010, and manufacturers of the speed signs say they've shown positive results. "The signs are intended as a reminder to motorists that they are speeding and our records show that they are effective," the director of one of the manufacturers said. For more information, go to <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2007/04/21/ndrive21.xml>.

Source: The Telegraph, April 24, 2007

### **Graphic Photos Promoted to Show Danger of Excessive Speed**

A Welsh police chief is using graphic photos of crash fatalities as part of his campaign against speeding. The photos of a decapitated motorcyclist and young men lying dead by a mangled car were shown to journalists and local authorities; both crashes were caused by excessive speeding. "We did it to serve a purpose. The images are there to make an impact today," the chief said. The next phase of the campaign will include hidden speed cameras and a softer message. For more information, go to



[http://icwales.icnetwork.co.uk/0100news/0200wales/tm\\_headline=polic-chief-resorts-to-traffic-shock-tactics&method=full&objectid=18969718&siteid=50082-name\\_page.html](http://icwales.icnetwork.co.uk/0100news/0200wales/tm_headline=polic-chief-resorts-to-traffic-shock-tactics&method=full&objectid=18969718&siteid=50082-name_page.html) . Source: icWales, April 26, 2007

### **Simulator Demonstrates How Speed, Alcohol and Cell Phones Pose Dangers On the Road**

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) launched an online simulator to show drivers the dangers of speeding, drunk driving and using a cell phone in the car. Visitors to the Web site can see how long it takes to stop for an object that dashes across the road and how weather, cell phones and alcohol increase risk. "Spending a few minutes trying out the simulator should demonstrate to motorists if they need to slow down, and why driving while using a mobile phone or after drinking could well end in tragedy," said a RoSPA road safety project officer. To try the simulator, log on to [http://www.fleetnews.co.uk/external\\_link/?sl=http://www.stoppingdistances.org.uk](http://www.fleetnews.co.uk/external_link/?sl=http://www.stoppingdistances.org.uk) .

Source: FleetNewsNet, April 23, 2007

### **Find Tips For Driving in a Foreign Country on New Web Site**

Avis and British Airways developed a new Web site that will cover road signs, speed limits, traffic offenses and regulations and documentation in 16 European countries and the United States, Australia, South Africa and New Zealand. The site includes tips on driving in a foreign country and will help companies with duty-of-care obligations for their workers abroad. For more information, go to [www.avisba.com](http://www.avisba.com) and click on "Driving Guides." Source: FleetNewsNet, April 17, 2007

### **New Traffic Signs Help Drivers Navigate Intersections**

A "smart traffic sign" will be piloted at a Tel Aviv intersection to help drivers make the right split-second decisions at intersections. When the sign identifies a crash risk, it attempts to increase drivers' attention by activating blinking lights that tell them to give the right of way. The Technion-Israel Institute of Technology also is working on a sign that would flash at drivers about to run a red light. The light could also be used as a red-light running camera for law enforcement. For more information, go to <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1177514486045&pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull> . Source: The Jerusalem Post, April 25, 2007

### **Employees of Small Companies More Likely to Drive Personal Cars For Work**

According to a new Arval survey, companies with small fleets are less likely to comply with duty-of-care responsibilities regarding employees driving their personal vehicles. On average, about a third of companies with fleets have workers drive their own cars on business. Of fleets with five to 24 vehicles, that figure jumps to 50 percent. "It is a concern that smaller fleets remain on a duty-of-care tightrope by allowing employees to use their own car for business purposes, possibly with insufficient policing of vehicle suitability or insurance," Arval's head of market analysis said. Source: FleetNewsNet, April 19, 2007